

Amendments to the Abstract:

Please **replace** the Abstract with the following:

The invention provides methods of reducing the friability and increasing the bowl life of food items such as cereal products (including ready to eat cereals and corn and tortilla chips), of potato chips, and of freeze-dried foods. The methods involve contacting the food item with water and then drying the food item to approximately its original water content. The water may be applied by any convenient means so long as it does not cause overhydration of the food item. The invention further provides methods of delaying the development of rancidity in nuts. The methods comprise contacting the nuts with water. In preferred forms, the methods comprise causing mild abrasion of the nuts to facilitate hydration.